

period of 12 months. Exxon's interests overseas aren't going away after 1 year. That is not good enough to resolve what is, potentially, a massive conflict of interest.

I am worried that Mr. Tillerson, as CEO and chairman of ExxonMobil, conducted business with all three foreign state sponsors of terrorism through a foreign subsidiary in a way that allowed Exxon to evade U.S. sanctions. As the head of Exxon, Mr. Tillerson did business with the terrorism trifecta: Iran, Syria, and Sudan. This raises serious questions that the man who is nominated to be the face of the United States to the world has so much experience doing business with our most prominent and concerning adversaries.

At the hearing, under questions from the senior Senator from New Jersey and the Senator from Oregon, Mr. Tillerson denied having knowledge of these dealings and directed the Senators to seek more information from ExxonMobil itself. Three times he told the committee that he "did not recall" any of the details. Throughout the afternoon, it sounded like he was following the dodgeball rules for confirmation hearings: Dodge, dip, duck, dive, and dodge. In fact, he basically admitted it to the junior Senator from Virginia.

I just read in the Washington Post that, on three separate occasions, the SEC, or the Securities and Exchange Commission, wrote letters directed to Mr. Tillerson himself seeking more information on these undisclosed dealings during his tenure as CEO and chairman—once on January 6, 2006, once on May 4, 2006, and again on December 1, 2010.

In general, I like to give people the benefit of the doubt. But it gives me great concern that Mr. Tillerson says he has zero recollection of an SEC inquiry into his company's business dealings with foreign state sponsors of terrorism—real concern. He got three letters from the SEC on a matter of major, major importance that would concern the whole corporation—the giant ExxonMobil—and he says he doesn't recall. This is the kind of matter that should be handled and approved by an organization's most senior leader.

Mr. Tillerson presents himself as a hands-on manager. It defies credibility to believe he doesn't recall. This is extraordinarily troubling because either one of two things is true. Either Mr. Tillerson was aware of these SEC letters and was familiar with these dealings but didn't want to answer the questions honestly, or, indeed, he had no knowledge of consequential financial disclosures made by his own company. If we consider that, in concert with all the other things he claimed to have "no knowledge of"—including the widely reported extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, whether or not Saudi Arabia was a human rights violator—imagine, he had no knowledge of whether Saudi Arabia was a human

rights violator; people in a fifth grade world history class would know that—whether or not his company was engaged in lobbying against, or perhaps for, energy sanctions—then maybe Mr. Tillerson does not have the necessary management skills or knowledge base to be the chief diplomat of the United States of America, running a Department that is obviously worldwide, far-flung, and with thousands and thousands and thousands of employees.

Simply put, we need answers. What did Mr. Tillerson know and when did he know it? The American people expect their Secretary of State to be straightforward and honest with them—not coy, not dissembling. Most importantly, they expect him or her to have the interests of the American people and our friends and allies around the world at the forefront of their mind.

Unfortunately for Mr. Tillerson, and for this country, yesterday's hearings and today's reports raise more questions than answers. The American people deserve answers.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Democratic whip.

#### DACA AND BRIDGE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in 8 days, just a short distance from this Senate Chamber, Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 45th President of the United States. On that date, January 20, 2017, the fate of more than 750,000 young American immigrants will hang in the balance. They will be waiting to learn if they have a place in America's future or whether they will lose their legal status to stay in the United States. For many of them, it is a period of the highest anxiety, wondering what is going to happen next.

It was 7 years ago that I sent a letter to President Obama. I had introduced the DREAM Act, which said that if you were brought to America as a child, an infant, or an adolescent, lived here all your life, went to school and did well, and had no criminal record of any consequences, we would give you a chance to stay. Over a period of time, you would be able to become legal in America—a citizen in America. Sixteen years ago, I introduced it, and we passed it once in the Senate, once in the House, and never, ever made it the law of the land.

I wrote to President Obama, with Senator Dick Lugar, Republican of In-

diana, and said: Find some way, if you can, as President, to protect these young DREAMers, as we call them. And he did. It is called DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

What it basically said is that if you qualify under the DREAM Act, you could pay a filing fee of almost \$500, go through a criminal background check and interview, and, then, if you qualify, you will be given a 2-year temporary protection from deportation and the ability to work. So far, over 750,000 young people have come forward. They have made such a difference in their own lives, in the lives of their families, and even in our country.

I have come over 100 times to tell their stories, and I will tell another one today. But I want to also announce that today we have a significant bipartisan breakthrough for this Congress: Republican Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina and I have introduced the BRIDGE Act. The BRIDGE Act, which has bipartisan sponsorship, would say that even if we eliminated President Obama's Executive order, we would protect these young people from deportation and allow them to continue to work and study.

I want to thank Senator GRAHAM. He has been a terrific partner.

This is an issue which weighs heavily on my mind and conscience. We believe this is a reasonable way to extend this protection and to say to Congress in the meantime: Get to work. Roll up your sleeves. Pass a comprehensive immigration bill. Work with the new President, work with both sides, Democrats and Republicans, and come up with an approach.

I thank Senator GRAHAM for joining me in the introduction of this BRIDGE Act.

For the young people across America, I can tell you, I understand your fears. I understand your anxiety. There are many of us who are dedicated to making certain that this ends well for you and for your family.

There are pretty amazing young people who are in that category I have addressed. One of them is Jose Espinoza. At the age of 2, Jose Espinoza was brought here from Mexico. He grew up in the northwest suburbs of Chicago and became an excellent student. In high school, he was a member of the National Honor Society, and he graduated in the top 3 percent of his class. He was elected to the student council every year in high school, the treasurer, vice president, editor of the high school yearbook, mentored and taught physical education to a freshman class of 40 students. He was also captain of the varsity track and field team and a member of the soccer team and the school orchestra.

In his spare time, if there was any, Jose volunteered with the United Way, and as a result of his academic record and volunteer service, he received a college scholarship from the United Way.

Incidentally, DREAMers—undocumented—don't qualify for any Federal

assistance for their education, so they have to find it in other places. His work with the United Way helped to pay his way at the college. He went to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and received multiple academic awards and continued his volunteer service with Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity. He received the Distinguished Service Key, the fraternity's highest award. He graduated with a bachelor of science in kinesiology and then went on to earn a master's degree in public health at the University of Illinois.

In his last semester of graduate school, President Obama announced the DACA Program, which I described earlier. He applied, signed up, and became part of that DACA Program.

What is he doing today with his master's degree, with his opportunity to work in fields of public health and such? He signed up for Teach For America. We know Teach For America is a national nonprofit organization that places talented recent college graduates in urban and rural schools that have a shortage of teachers. Jose is currently a high school physics and public health teacher in the city of Chicago.

He wrote me a letter, and he said:

DACA changed my life in more ways than I can ever explain. It has given me the power to help others, the freedom to travel, and the right to legally work without fear of deportation. Simply put, without DACA, I wouldn't exist for my students and my community.

If DACA is eliminated, what will happen to Jose? The day after DACA, he won't be able to teach. He could be deported back to Mexico, where he hasn't lived since he was a 2-year-old toddler. That would be a tragedy, not just for Jose and his family but for this Nation. This is a fine young man who, against great odds, undocumented, has written this amazing record in his young life. He is a giving person. He could be making a lot more money than his pay with Teach For America in an inner city school.

Do we need Jose Espinoza in America's future? I think we do. That is why I am happy that this BRIDGE Act would give him a chance and Congress a chance to address this issue of DREAMers. I hope President-Elect Trump will understand this and continue the DACA Program. If he decides to end the DACA Program, I hope his administration will work closely and rapidly with Congress to pass the BRIDGE Act into law.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROVIDING FOR AN EXCEPTION TO A LIMITATION AGAINST APPOINTMENT OF PERSONS AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WITHIN SEVEN YEARS OF RELIEF FROM ACTIVE DUTY AS A REGULAR COMMISSIONED OFFICER OF THE ARMED FORCES—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to S. 84.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 84, a bill to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The motion is nondebatable.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR AN EXCEPTION TO A LIMITATION AGAINST APPOINTMENT OF PERSONS AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WITHIN SEVEN YEARS OF RELIEF FROM ACTIVE DUTY AS A REGULAR COMMISSIONED OFFICER OF THE ARMED FORCES

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 84) to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the provisions of Public Law 114-254, there will now be up to 10 hours of debate, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we are on the Mattis waiver.

Anyone who would like to debate, please come over.

In the meantime, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak as in morning business for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF JEFF SESSIONS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, the Senate is holding hearings on each of President-Elect Trump's nominees

to his Cabinet. Traditionally, Presidents are accorded a very high level of deference on assembling their own team, in part because these nominees are directly accountable to the President. But they are accountable to the American people too.

No Cabinet member is more powerful or has more impact on the day-to-day lives of Americans than the Attorney General of the United States.

The Attorney General is, indeed, a general, in command of an army of thousands of lawyers whose words carry enormous weight and power. It is the weight and power of the people of the United States. He speaks for us. He charges defendants in our name. He has sweeping authority to bring criminal charges in all Federal offenses, enormous unreviewable discretion in cases ranging from minor misdemeanors to the most serious felonies. In every sense, as capital penalties can be sought for some of these crimes, he wields the power of life and death.

The Attorney General's authority is not only sweeping, it is uniquely independent of the President's Cabinet. His decisions must supersede partisan politics. In most cases, there is no recourse to overrule his decisions unless there is political interference. He is not just another government lawyer or even just another member of the President's Cabinet. He is the Nation's lawyer, and he must be the Nation's legal counsel and conscience.

The job of U.S. Attorney General at stake here is one that I know pretty well. Like some of my colleagues in this body, I served as U.S. attorney, the chief Federal prosecutor in Connecticut.

I reported to the U.S. Attorney General. For years afterward as a private litigator and then as attorney general of the State of Connecticut for 20 years, I fought alongside and sometimes against the U.S. Attorney General and the legal forces at his disposal. I have seen his power, or hers, firsthand. The power of this Attorney General is awesome, as is that of any Attorney General.

In the best of cases, they are inspiring too. Even as he protects the public from vicious and violent criminal offenders, his role is also to protect the innocent from unfounded charges that could shatter their lives even if they are acquitted. As Justice Robert Jackson, a former Attorney General himself, once said: His job is not to convict, but to assure justice is done.

So this job requires a singular level of intellect and integrity and nonpartisan but passionate devotion to the rule of law and an extraordinary sense of conscience. That is because he is responsible for so much more than prosecuting and preventing crime and ensuring public safety. He is responsible for aggressively upholding our Nation's sacred constitutional commitment to protecting individual rights and liberties and preventing infringement on them, even by the government itself, maybe especially by the government.